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SUBJECT: THESSALONIKI: RIOTS RAGE FOR FOURTH DAY BUT VIOLENCE
APPEARS TO BE DECLINING

REF: ATHENS 1649

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On December 10, anarchists and other demonstrators clashed with police throughout northern Greece in a fourth day of riots sparked by the fatal shooting of a 15 year old boy by police in Athens (reftel). Some 10,000 demonstrators marched through the downtown area, passed the U.S. Consulate General without incident and attacked police at the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace and Aristotle University with Molotov cocktails. The riots were less destructive than those of the previous three days. On December 7, 8 and 9, demonstrators damaged or destroyed over 100 shops, banks and other businesses in downtown Thessaloniki, as police adopted a "defensive" posture. Police arrested only a handful of protesters, prompting some local residents to call for more police intervention. END SUMMARY

RIOTING ENTERS FOURTH DAY, WITH LESS DESTRUCTION

¶2. (SBU) Riots continued for a fourth day in northern Greece following the fatal shooting of a 15 year old boy in Athens by police on December 6. Around 1100 on December 10, approximately 10,000 self-styled anarchists, communists and students marched peacefully through the downtown area, passed the U.S. Consulate General without incident and proceeded to the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, where they threw Molotov cocktails at police. The demonstrators next marched to Aristotle campus, breaking store windows along the way, and clashed repeatedly with police. One civilian was reportedly injured in the clashes. Police detained several protesters. No demonstrations have been announced for December 11.

¶3. (SBU) On the afternoon of December 9, two groups of some 5000 self-described anarchists, students and teachers marched through downtown Thessaloniki and attacked two police stations with Molotov cocktails. The demonstrators moved to Aristotle University, where they damaged three campus buildings and 70 nearby stores and clashed with police until after 2300. Police responded when attacked but otherwise avoided confrontation with the demonstrators, as part of their reported orders to maintain a "defensive" posture. Police arrested 16 people for looting and briefly detained 7 for vandalism. The latter were released due to lack of evidence. Some residents have begun to call for tougher action against the violence, which has nearly paralyzed the downtown area. Police say demonstrators are well-organized, communicating rapidly throughout northern Greece via the internet and SMS. According to a senior police official, demonstrators caused extensive damage December 7 - 9: 19 Bank branches, 86 stores (some of them were completely destroyed), a subway construction site, two police stations, a hotel, the Water and Sewage Company building, several cafis and torched 150 trash cans. While police did little to stop this damage, fire

fighters reportedly acted quickly and effectively to extinguish fires and prevent more damage from Molotov cocktails.

CITY STILL REELING FROM DECEMBER 8 RIOTS

13. (SBU) The December 9 and 10 riots were considerably less destructive than those of the previous two days. On December 8, demonstrators damaged or destroyed over 100 shops, banks and other businesses in downtown Thessaloniki. Beginning at around 1100, about 200 students and 50 anarchists marched through the downtown area breaking store windows and looting stores, passing in front of the Consulate without incident. At 1830 almost 2,000 Communist Party (KKE) supporters marched from Aristotle Square to the building housing the U.S. Consulate General (located on the 7th floor), where they stopped for 10 minutes, shouting anti-American slogans (e.g. "Americans, Killers of the People") and burning an American flag. At about 1930, approximately 5,000 anarchists and S?R??? (coalition of the left) members marched downtown to the area in front of the Consulate, where they smashed several store windows and hurled Molotov cocktails. They also damaged and attempted (unsuccessfully) to break down the large roll-down metal security gate at the entrance to the building housing the American Consulate. Demonstrators also attacked police guarding the nearby Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace with Molotov cocktails and police answered with tear gas. The rioters also attacked a police station in Sykies, where they set fire to the guard booth, seriously injuring the policeman on duty. Late that evening the rioters sought refuge near the University.

VIOLENCE TRIGGERED BY SHOOTING OF 15 YEAR OLD IN ATHENS

14. (SBU) The demonstrations started in the early hours of December 7 with clashes between police and about 150 thugs who damaged store fronts and threw Molotov cocktails at police. They anarchists eluded police by taking refuge on the university campus. At 1300, almost 2,000 demonstrators held an anti-government rally in downtown Thessaloniki. Protesters

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marched downtown, past the U.S. Consulate, and attacked police at the Lefkos Pyrgos police station, 50 meters from the rear side of the Consulate building, with Molotov cocktails, stones, bottles and sticks. The police repelled rioters with tear gas, but not before they damaged numerous parked vehicles (including the personal car of a Consulate local employee parked behind the Consulate building). Protesters also attacked police at the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, the Ano Poli police station, City Hall, the Turkish Consulate, numerous banks and stores, and Aristotle University. Demonstrators battled police all night with Molotov cocktails. Two people were injured (a police officer and a civilian) but no arrests were reported by the police.

15. (U) Similar riots took place also in other northern cities December 7 - 10. In Kavala a group of anarchists attacked the police headquarters and caused damage to stores and vehicles in the surrounding area. In the northeastern Greek cities of Komotini and Xanthi demonstrators damaged stores and banks. Violence demonstrations took place also in the north-central Greek cities of Trikala, where a policeman was reportedly injured, and Larissa, where several bank branches were badly damaged.

CONGEN THESS SECURITY MEASURES

16. (SBU) Throughout the demonstrations, ConGen Thess has been in daily contact with the head of northern Greek police, who has assured us the police will continue to provide us all necessary support. Thess's Emergency Action Committee met December 9 and decided to close the Consulate at 1200 that day so that staff would not get caught in the riots. ConGen security personnel maintain a 24 hour presence inside the Consulate and closely monitor the surrounding area.

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